

A Reflection on My Time at the University of Washington

Sophia Militello

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I had no idea that I wanted to go the University of Washington when I applied. I did not bother filling out the honors application because I thought of it as my safety school. I had never been to Seattle or Washington state, but I knew a few kids from my school were applying, so I did too. My number two schools were University of Michigan and Villanova, both of which I applied to early action. I got in to Villanova, but deferred from Michigan. Getting into Villanova was exciting, but it was not the feeling I anticipated. Hearing back from all my schools in April, I got into Villanova, UC Davis, and UW and was waitlisted at Michigan. All of my friends, of course, were deciding where they wanted to go. My boyfriend at the time, who I was ready to break up with, but wanted to wait until after prom, was deciding between UW and Southern Methodist University (SMU). I didn't know where I wanted to go, but all I knew is that I did not want to go where Simon went. I had visited UW with my dad during the cherry blossoms and began leaning towards UW. Unfortunately, I was fairly certain Simon was going to go there; so, I waited. When he asked me what I was thinking, I would withhold my thoughts about UW and encourage him to go to SMU (whoops). Simon finally decided he was going to SMU, and that is when I decided I was going to UW. Looking back, it seems terrible that I was basing my college decision on a boy, but it was opposite of following a boy to school, so I was okay with it. In the end, I assumed I would do well anywhere I went, but I am happy I ended up at UW.

Being the youngest of three, I had watched my two siblings go through college decisions and believed I would have the same experience. The only problem was that my sister knew she wanted to be a NICU nurse since the 9th grade and had decided that Boston College was her

dream immediately on her college tours. My brother, who is extremely different from my sister, somehow knew he wanted to be a business major as soon as he began thinking about college. He knew that he wanted to go to Santa Clara immediately. So, when it came my time to decide on a college, I was ready to for the feeling of certainty; however, I thought every school seemed nice. I wanted to be a chemical engineer, I guess. Being an engineer seemed cool and I adored my chemistry teacher in high school, so why not? Then why wasn't I excited when I got in early to Villanova, direct into chemical engineering? The truth was I had no idea what I wanted to do or where I wanted to be, I was just doing what seemed best. So, I somehow ended up at UW as a pre-engineer and I was excited for college.

UW starts so late, it is absurd. I had already visited my best friend at Chapman University twice and was going stir crazy. Late September, I moved into McMahon with both my parents. To our surprise, no one in my cluster (an 8-person suite that had a shared bathroom and common area) was moving in my day. Everyone was moving in the following day. My dad had moved in my siblings and they had immediately run off to meet people, leaving my dad alone in their new cities. This time, my dad brought my mom and they were going immediately catch a ferry to the San Juan Islands to leave me alone with new friends. Well, that night I slept alone in my college dorm and was far from excited to be there. The next morning, I met all my suite mates and my roommate. My suitemates were all sophomores and friends from the year before, except for two of them. I took immediately to my suitemates but was not too fond of my roommate. As I immediately began on the engineering trek, Carol was living a casual life with Netflix and art classes; needless to say, I was envious.

That being said, freshman year was a huge transition. I lucked out and joined a FIG. My best friend of freshman year, Mikaela was in it with me! We toughed out our freshman year

together, but we both struggled. I did really well in high school, but I had to really try. College is for people who did really well in high school without trying. I struggled to find study buddies and did okay in my classes. I took introduction to computer science, better known as CSE 142, because I thought it would be interesting. I was not wrong, but it was HARD. I somehow befriended a chemical engineer and a graduate student, who were there for an easy 4.0. HA. I actually did not study with them until the final, but they really helped me understand the material. Throughout that quarter, I spent every Tuesday night (when the homework was due) with CSE direct admits who lived above me. Trevor was the most helpful as he was a phenomenal teacher and easy to persuade to give me the answer. With my upstairs friends and my classroom friends, I learned how important it is for me to befriend people in my class.

Freshman year was my adjusting time, but it was not a turning point in my education. It was just the beginning. I had taken an environmental course and was introduced to industrial compost, so I was developing my love for environmental action, but I was still on track to be an engineer. I now was considering Civil and Environmental Engineer. Already behind in math, I registered for two math courses at UCSD for the summer. It was calculus 2 and 3, and they were both 4 weeks. I took my calc 2 final on Saturday at 8pm and began calc 3 on Monday at 9am. Needless to say, two calculus classes after three quarters of college is a lot. I was tired, but I was still registered for my first quarter of organic chemistry.

Before I started ochem, I had registered for formal fall recruitment to join a sorority. I had wanted to give sorority life a try, since I had missed being a part of it my freshman year. Sorority recruitment is strange, but after a tough week, I ended up joining Alpha Delta Pi. Similar to choosing my college, I was told there would be a moment when I knew which chapter I wanted to join; however, again this was not true for me. I saw myself finding friends in any of

them, so I picked the one that tried the least to get me to join. Joining ADPi is one of my best decisions that I have made, it has given me friendships that will last a lifetime. I do believe that one of the many reasons I decided not to pursue engineering is because I wanted to have a balanced life of friends and school. A balance that became more difficult joining a sorority. With engineering, I was missing out on memories.

My first quarter in the sorority tested my ability of life and work balance. With fear of asking for help and seeming stupid, I did poorly in my first quarter in ochem. Although I did not fail, I did not pass with the standard I held for myself. After receiving my lowest grade at UW, I re-registered for the same class winter. Sophomore year winter quarter I registered for 4 STEM classes, which was a mistake. I took the same ochem again, Math 317, Physics 122, and Statics 210. Statics is determining static equilibrium of structures, a subset of physics. Unfortunately, all four classes had two midterms each. To make my quarter more stressful, the first set of midterms were all on Thursday and Friday of one week; four weeks later, I had four more midterms on the same two days again. The Friday of the second set of midterms, I had my CEP interview. I had to reschedule the time because I had 4 midterms. The interview went well, but I had thrown my application together last minute to make the deadline. I remember being fairly confident in my getting into CEP somehow. I received an email from Kelly for supplemental materials for my application, which I understood because it was really a horrible application.

At the same time, I had also applied to Chemistry, but because of my Ochem grade I did not think I would get in. Fast-forward to spring quarter, I had failed Math 317, but did well in the rest of my classes. I had applied to two majors and was waiting to hear back from both. I had decided to take a break from engineering requirements and only registered for two STEM classes and one writing course. Because of this, I would be applying to engineering on special

circumstances, but I needed a break. I was really enjoying my English course discussing secularism and having an overall better quarter. At the beginning of the quarter, I was accepted into CEP and was overjoyed. A few days later I was also admitted to Chemistry and I was ecstatic. Once admitted to both majors, I decided I would no longer be pursuing engineering. I was comfortable and excited for my junior year. I had developed an ability to balance my social life with my school work.

Come summer, my brother graduated from Santa Clara University and my family was going on a trip to Ecuador and the Galapagos. Following our trip, we had more family time at our lake house in Fort Erie, Ontario. Next it was my time to travel on my own to Costa Rica to study abroad. School for study abroad is a joke and I enabled myself to explore beyond the comfort of my host family. I really struggled with Spanish but was content with how far I had come with it by the end of the 5 weeks. On a trip to the northern province of Costa Rica, I had a magical experience, helping save turtle eggs from poachers. It was a tiring effort, as we walked the beaches from 8pm to 10pm and 2 am to 5 am in the pouring rain in pitch black. Tired and wet, I was relieved from my misery when I extracted 104 eggs from a freshly dug nest. Next, our group saw a mother turtle dig her nest and lay 80 eggs, then return to the ocean. The natural environment is wonderfully amazing, and I will never forget my evening in the rain. Both my trip to Costa Rica and my trip to Galapagos showed need for environmental action for the better of the various species coexisting with us humans, furthering my passion for the environment.

Returning to school in the fall for my junior year, I was excited to be a part of two majors and have figured out my plans in college. I participated in formal fall recruitment as a recruiter and strangely loved it. It really helped me meet other members of my chapter and get closer to my friends. It was a tiring two weeks, but 38 new members moved into my chapter house and it

was new and exciting. During welcome week for the new members, I had to go to CEP orientation. I was bummed to miss out on various activities, but I had another community to join. On the visits to alumni's work, I went to a CEPster who had doubled majored in Biology and CEP. It was nice to see that people had also paired science with CEP, even if they did not work in a scientific field.

The first day of actual CEP class, I was nervous. We had an assignment due, and I was afraid I did not meet the standards by Professor Chris Campbell. I became very close with half of my cohort, but really did not know the other members in Mark's class. In the class, I also learned that I was horrible at reading early philosophers. I struggled in 301 and had to work hard to achieve a passing grade. I found everything my classmates and Chris were saying to be extremely fascinating, but I found I myself did not have as good of an understanding on all the concepts presented. I facilitated with Grace and had an excellent time working with her. Grace and I were compatible partners, and I loved having her to help me unpack the readings. By the end of fall, I still had no idea what CEP actually was.

Winter quarter was the environmental focus for CEP, but I was disappointed in what I learned in this class. I grew much closer to Jasmine as we spent time after every class ranting about how horrible it was to represent the environment. Both of us drawn to CEP for the environment and were distraught at what we actually got. I also developed my fear for the great earthquake that is supposed to happen in Seattle. Understanding that Seattle would be destroyed by this highly anticipated earthquake, I no longer wanted to live in Seattle after college. Those are the most memorable aspects of winter quarter, nothing too significant happened.

Spring quarter finally introduced us to urban planning. This quarter, I spent a lot of time in the Chinese International District (CID). It helped me branch out of the U-District and brought

me closer to other CEPsters. It became my favorite CEP class and to me, emphasized the power of community. My dad visited one weekend and we spent a good amount of time at various museums within the CID. It made my project unique by bringing my dad into my research. During spring quarter, I had a class with a senior in my sorority and in CEP, Kiana Ballo. It was nice to have someone to walk with to and from class. Kiana encouraged me to become more involved in CEP and gave me the push to branch out from my sorority. At the end of Spring Quarter, I spent 5 hours setting up graduation. In that time, I became more aware that the graduates would be me next year, but it still seemed so far away. Writing this reflection, senior year has flown by and it is crazy.

The summer before senior year, I worked for the first-time during college. I had the opportunity to have two internships. One with the City of Encinitas, I worked with the stormwater team and participated in water quality testing. I had a wonderful boss, who truly showed me the possibility of environmentalism. She had passion and always stayed true to herself, never holding back her feelings and opinions. We spent two days every week together and I learned a lot, but mainly from her and less from the internship. For my other internship, I worked in a surface coating lab with five other lab technicians. Surface coatings make any surface hydrophobic, hydrophilic, oleophobic, or oleophilic. I learned an immense amount about working in the chemical industry and valued all of the mentors I gained. I really enjoyed my time in the lab, but I knew by the end that I did not want to work in a lab. Despite all that I learned, I need more contact and interaction with people rather than chemicals and coworkers. Along with my two internships, I planned formal fall recruitment and work week for my sorority. I learned that it extremely important to be able to rely on any partner in work. Unfortunately, for recruitment, I could not rely on my partner. I ended up doing a job made for two by myself.

Carrying out my plans, I came to understand the various learning styles of every girl in my sorority. Coordinating 90 dramatic girls was very difficult, but come bid day, it was all worth it.

After recruitment, it was time to begin my senior year. Fall quarter was filled with gamedays and bringing some of my best friends to the bars for the very first time. Senior project began pretty rough, as I had no clear idea on what I wanted to do. Being in the B-section of senior project, I became close and reliant on Oskar as my accountability partner. I believe we did more work in the B-section, by ourselves, than anyone in the main section. I was in a lab class about solar power and solar cells, which had extremely difficult concepts, but was fascinating. I learned a great deal, and it made me want to know more about clean energy. It made me regret not joining UW solar and not participating in more clubs on campus. I was also in the hardest physical chemistry course, but I was very proud at receiving a grade above a 3.0. Lastly, I was working on a project for the City of Bellevue, part of the LCY program. This project was testing of group work. My group had a horrible dynamic as only 3 of us did any work at all. I also had an unofficial role as the mediator between one of our team members with the rest of the group. I enabled everyone to survive the project. Overall, fall quarter was a success. Before taking my finals, I was invited to Michael's house for dinner with Keanan and his wife. I was honored to be invited into his life and was elated to meet his wife. His wife and him were wonderful hosts and we ended up having a 5-hour dinner, talking about anything and everything. I am lucky to have Michael as a friend and will have him in my life for many years to come.

Finishing my last final, three hours later I was at the airport on my way to New Zealand with my family. My family trip to New Zealand, the Cook Islands, and Australia was amazing. I began the trip with just my dad, and we had never traveled together just the two of us. It was nice to have time with just him. Once the rest of my family arrived, I joked with my dad that I missed

just having him. Throughout the trip, my parents, especially my dad, spent time discussing my future, which was fast approaching. I still had no idea what I wanted to do, and there was seemingly no solution in sight. Being with my family for nearly 3 weeks was unique and valuable. Living in 4 different cities, it is difficult to get everyone together. The next time all of us would be together, I would be graduating.

Winter quarter was my most overwhelming quarter of senior year. I was in a very difficult lab course that I did not enjoy. Senior project was more demanding than I had time for, but I managed to complete everything. It was strange to me that I had so much going on, but still managed to submit everything on time; whereas the majority of my classmates failed to submit nearly everything. I think this is when I began to resent the lack of care in CEP. It seemed that people knew they could push their limits, so they did. I believe that CEP should have more strict deadlines to help people meet the demands of the world outside of CEP. I also think this is the Chemistry major mindset, which CEP does not have. In chemistry, I nearly 4.0 physical chemistry and was extremely satisfied when the quarter ended. I had the opportunity to redeem myself from philosophy fall of junior year. In ethics with Mark, I understood philosophers and reading better. Reading Aristotle, I understood the sarcasm and jokes, unlike the previous year. This had given me the satisfaction of improving my skill set in school. As the quarter came to an end, I received an acceptance letter to be a part of a program that teaches English in Madrid for a year. I had 10 days to make a decision and I had no idea if I wanted to do it.

For the beginning of spring break, I traveled to Salt Lake City to ski with my mom, sister, and my mom's college roommate, Suzy. Suzy helped guide me to my decision to teach. She was extremely passionate about education and developing students, who loved to learn. Although she made a note that I may be bored in Spain, she encouraged me to go. I have a goal of learning

Spanish in the next year and volunteering my time to stay busy abroad. Both my parents lived abroad immediately following college, so I look forward to an opportunity that they support. They were both culture majors, my dad a German major; fluent in German, he moved to a small town in Germany to work at a post office for 6 months. My mom was an Asian studies major; fluent in Mandarin, she moved to China and Taiwan for 2 years and worked in the medical devices field. Moving to Spain, I am following in their footsteps to some extent and am excited for my new adventure!

Having figured out what I was doing after I graduated, I began my last quarter of college. Of course, my last two requirements, one for each major, overlapped. I emailed both departments about possible options. CEP was extremely accommodating and helped me graduate on time. Chemistry, on the other hand, told me to drop my Chemistry major. Surprisingly, I was not a huge fan of the second idea. With CEP's help, I was able to graduate with two majors on time! Only technically enrolled in one class, I had two hours of class per day. I was the most relaxed I had ever been in the past 8 years of school. I had plenty of time to focus on senior project, spend time with friends, and enjoy my last quarter at UW. I created my own accountability partner for the quarter. Jasmine and I have met every Wednesday this quarter and it has truly helped both of us stay on task. Close to senior project night, we listened to one another present at least 5 times, helping one another make a concise and clear presentation. We joked that we could probably give each other's presentations in the end. By the end of the quarter, I was still excited about what I was learning from my senior project, but I was slightly bored. It is extremely difficult to work on a project for an entire school year. I am happy in what I have produced, but still wish I had done more. All in all, spring quarter has been wonderful and one of my favorite times at UW. I cannot believe that I am graduating in less than a week and leaving Seattle for over a year.

It will be exciting to see where everyone ends up in the next year and I cannot wait to spend time with everyone post-grad life.

Recruitment is a large part of my life, both with CEP and ADPi. I have been a part of Outreach and Admissions (O&A) all 6 quarters in CEP. I believe it is really difficult to change committees as you develop projects and allegiance to one committee, becoming too invested to leave. O&A has also helped me grow closer to members of CEP in my cohort as well as outside my cohort. It has made me more confident presenting and talking to people. I took lead this year on interview training, after the committee recognized a flaw in the system. Planning and carrying out interview training were a success and changed the dynamic of participating in the interview process. I am sad to leave O&A as I believe I have an excellent grasp on what can add value to the interview process, but I have to leave it on the rising seniors and have faith they will continue our efforts. I joined O&A because I had just recruited for my sorority and had a new fascination with recruiting. After formal recruitment, I was asked to be a member of the informal recruitment team. With that team, we gained 5 new COBs (continuous open bidding) and I was proud of my contributions. At the end of December, it was time for elections, and I ran unopposed for formal fall recruitment chair. Formal fall recruitment is a huge task that requires work across all quarters. It took immense planning and tested my patience to nearly breaking point. I had a love hate relationship with my position but am grateful with how it helped me to grow and develop various skill sets. Also, because new members were put in charge of continuous open bidding that same quarter, I was put in charge of them. This meant that I had to teach them and work closely with them to ensure they did well at informally recruiting new members. I have developed many skills from being a leading member in the recruiting process, both in CEP and ADPi, that will help me in the near future with any profession.

Being in CEP these past two years, I have struggled to balance it with my sorority and my chemistry major. Beginning with my sorority, sorority sisters and CEPsters always competed for my attention and time. Senior year, I have recognized that I am not included in various CEP plans as I usually chose my sorority over them. I worked harder to come to happy hour and other events to truly embrace the CEP community. It is difficult because I live in my sorority with all my friends, making it extremely convenient to hang out with them over CEPsters. Fall retreat both years required me missing big little reveal, an event that I always eagerly anticipated. In addition to my sorority, I struggle to find a balance between CEP and chemistry. Having to miss two CEP classes for chemistry has been hard for me. I love participating in class and seeing everyone every day, but chemistry limits my abilities. I also prioritize chemistry work over CEP work, as it requires more time and rigor. The time I have to dedicate to chemistry courses and work, limits and reduces my time with CEPsters, further straining my relationships.

I am thankful for my communities at the University of Washington, specifically in CEP and Alpha Delta Pi. I am sad to leave both behind to move to Madrid, but I am lucky to call so many people my lifelong friends. I continue to stay in contact with and rely on anyone in these communities in the future. I cannot imagine my time at UW without CEP and I am forever grateful for changing my major. Thank you, Chris, for facilitating a major that requires time of reflection, I have come to appreciate the CEP community even more.